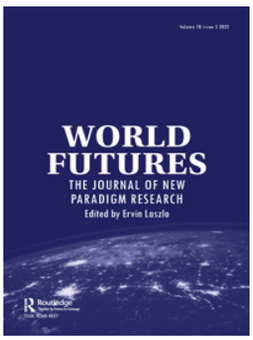

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Food Narrations and Teaching Migration: An Autobiographical Approach to "Knowing the Other"

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ABSTRACT

Is the clash of civilizations, or that of racism, the paradigm that best describes the intercultural dynamics that characterize the cultural horizon of young people today? This article addresses this question based on research conducted between 2012 and 2016 in four secondary schools in Piedmont by researchers at the University of Gastronomic Sciences. The research looked at adolescents and dealt with the topic of "knowing the Other" through the collection and patrimonialization of life stories about food. The results illustrate an educational model that stimulates young people to extend their knowledge of cultural diversity and overcome the considerable indifference towards discovery of "the Other" that appears to characterize most young people today.

KEYWORDS

Education; ethnography; indifference; Italy; life stories; multiculturalism; other

Introduction

"*This is the first time a friend of mine has asked me about my land… that made me happy and made me feel at home*". These are the words of Mary[1], a girl who attended one of the projects promoted by researchers that the University of Gastronomic Sciences conducted as part of a

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multiannual initiative in the secondary schools aimed at the study of cultural integration processes. These words express a profound need lived by Mary and, more generally, by young first-generation immigrants in Italy. It is a need to share a part of their lives that is difficult to communicate to their Italian peers. School programs often do not include specific ways of deepening the kind of cultural diversity that marks today's *ethnoscape* (Appadurai, 1996, p. 33), i.e. the ethnic horizon (Italian, in this case). This article explores the anthropological profile emerging on the increasingly multicultural horizon of Italian schools. It questions the assumption according to which the growing cultural plurality results in xenophobic dynamics. It is based on research conducted in in four pilot schools in Northwestern Italy and focuses on life stories about food and cultural diversity.

The article begins by framing the debate about multiculturalism, particularly in schools. Then, it presents the research, its insights, and the projects developed in the Piedmont area. From an ethnographic perspective, it deepens the emerging framework for the perception of cultural diversity experienced by the participating students. It highlights that the main problem perceived by first-generation immigrant students is not the hostility of their peers, but rather what they perceive as lack of interest in their culture and traditions. It then describes how the implemented educational model can positively respond to the need to create more awareness of cultural diversity, more involvement, and exchange among young people.

Multiculturalism and School

The theme of multiculturalism was the focus of much debate in social sciences in the 1990s. However, in the last decade, the concept of multiculturalism has gained prominence with the intensification of migratory movements in Europe and the Mediterranean (Hewitt, 2013). At present, "multiculturalism" is a fundamental keyword (Williams, 1983) in the theme of migration, which in turn has taken a central role in the tumultuous national and European public debate (Andersson, 2014; De Genova, 2017; Zanfrini, 2018).

The concept of multiculturalism describes the existence of a plurality of traditions and ethnic groups in the same territory. Originally, a positive value was attached to the term, linked to principles of equality and tolerance that were intended to contribute to the creation of a harmonious and plural society. It was also used to define the active policies that could "*truly promote pluralism, the peaceful coexistence of diverse cultures and equal citizenship*" (Prato, 2009, p. 16). Intrinsically based on the juxtaposition of cultural differences, however, this term has become the

center of a vibrant debate in the social sciences (Fontefrancesco, 2012). As suggested by Prato (2009, p. 2), *"even among those who in principle advocate multiculturalism, criticism has been expressed of policies that continue to exoticize 'otherness' […]. Stronger critics argue that multiculturalism is a basically divisive concept that ultimately favors one community over another, fueling competition and conflict"*.

Today, we witness the awakening of dormant forms of intolerance and xenophobia (Berrocal, 2010) in Italy, too. New questions emerge about how to organize an increasingly multiethnic society, especially considering the history of a country that, as a peninsula, has become a migratory destination for over twenty years (Bravo, 2013). In this context, "multiculturalism" has also become a political term aimed at defining a set of different actions, often with contradictory meanings. As a matter of fact, the term is used, on the one hand, to indicate actions to promote intercultural communication and encourage hybridizations and synergic cultural developments; on the other, it indicates a way to stress the differences between ethnic groups and to foster a fundamental, sociocultural competition between them, even at the risk of exacerbating more or less dormant conflicts (Cotter, 2011). With such a variety of approaches and meanings, the semiotic richness this term emerges and makes its own definition particularly elusive (Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010). Although the anthropological community started again, in the last decade, to interrogate the meaning of this term and its relation to the new context of global migration (Baumann & Vertovec, 2011; Vertovec, 2010), such complexity expresses the profound sense of a society that is still trying to deal with and give a meaning to its own fast-changing ethnic horizon, in order to build the backbone of a new, culturally plural, society.

In this context of profound transformation, a progressive change in social poetics (Herzfeld, 1997) is highlighted throughout the West. Such a change is aimed at flattening the confrontation between cultures to a mere relationship between an "Us" (white, Christian, European …) and an "Other" (non-white, non-Christian, foreign …). Ontologically, these categories are dense and irreconcilable, despite anthropology's contribution in showing, since Barth's work (1969), the limits of such a conception as unable to represent the actual complexity and plurality of identities (Remotti, 2007). Today, the public repetition of such a rhetoric seems to define a social horizon characterized by a daily clash of cultures (Huntington, 1996). Simultaneously, it reveals the real difficulties inherent in constructing, entrenching, and normalizing a dialogue between individuals, languages and communities. Furthermore, it hides the reality of everyday life as lived by new and old Italians, separated by silence, solitude, and incommunicability (Giordano, 2014; Syring, 2009).

In such a difficult context, the migrant population, especially the young, is described as a paradoxical entity: it is a victim in need of protection and integration, but at the same time it threatens the integrity of the host society (Lems, 2019). This fallacy results in an unresolved question about the tools and practices to be put in place in order to facilitate the processes of integration, exchange, and dialogue between the various communities that make up the current, local, ethnic horizon. Thus, this question cannot bypass the school context and the way it can facilitate or slow down such processes of integration (Gobbo, 2007). Indeed, the school is the institution in charge of guiding young people on the path toward individual cultural definition and the exercise of full citizenship (Ardizzone, 2012; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017). That touches on the question of the tools that can be used to encourage the emergence of "intercultural friendships" (Costa, 2013).

The limitations of the instruments currently implemented by official curricula have been recurrently highlighted, despite the contribution they make to children, especially teenagers, in developing an individual identity capable of synthetizing various cultural influences (Giorgis, 2013; Peano, 2013; Pescarmona, 2012). The challenge is open about how to formulate new tools and test new educational approaches. Doing so continues the path opened by numerous experiments in the international (Banks, 2009) and Italian (Gobbo, 2007; Gobbo & Gomes, 2003; Sartore, 2014) contexts. More than the practice itself, such a pathway leads towards the horizon of understanding ordinary suffering (Stewart, 2007), a tool young people can use to address the everyday, both in school and outside, according to the way in which cultural diversity is understood.

Field Research

The research moves in this direction and focuses on the context of secondary schools. It aims to study and give value to the increasing cultural diversity of the schools (Elia, 2012). To this end, work has been carried out in Piedmont since 2012. Piedmont is one of the regions with the largest foreign populations in Italy (IDOS, 2018). Immigration in the region has developed since the 1980s. Over 400,000 foreigners currently live in the region, approximately 10% of the entire population (www.piemonteimmigrazione.it). Foreigners are concentrated in large urban centers, such as Turin, with more than half of the foreign presence in the region, and in other cities. The foreign population has a large young component (over 20%) and a small section made up of the over 65 s (about 2%). *"During the 90 s, direct immigration in Piedmont was mostly from North Africa and Central-Eastern Asia, whereas migrants from Eastern Europe*

began to increase at beginning of 2000. At the end of 2010, the Romanians were the largest migrant community, by far (34.4%), followed by Albanians (11.5%), Moldovans (2.5%), Ukrainians (2.3%) and Macedonians (1.9%). The number of resident immigrants from Morocco was still significant (16.1%) and so, to a lesser extent, was that of Chinese (3.5%) and Peruvians (3.3%)" (IDOS, 2011, p. 1).

The work presented here has been conducted from 2012 to 2016, within the European project titled "Open Discovery Space" (https://portal.opendiscoveryspace.eu). This project aimed at stimulating innovation in education through integration, digital resources, and a dedicated online platform for students, teachers, parents and public officials who could share digital learning resources and good teaching practices. Specifically, the research unit of the University of Gastronomic Sciences was involved in the development of educational and digital resources related to the themes of contemporary history, which were collected in the on-line archive "*The Granaries of Memory*" (www.granaidellamemoria.it). *The Granaries of Memory*, created in 2010 (Fassino & Porporato, 2016) and awarded the 2016 Europa Nostra Awards, "*are made of interviews, videos of people who own narratives, forms of knowledge, and practices of tradition. […] Generally, their testimonies in video reconstruct a life story, the autobiography of the interviewee. […] Short or long interviews have equal value within the project*" (Grimaldi & Porporato, 2011, p. 5). The collection of these materials responded to the ethical imprint of the project, in order to contribute to "*a new humanism that places humans and their values at the center of society, especially at the heart of communities, places, and squares where people are a daily, active part of collective memory, which, as such, rethinks and remodels the future, builds and rebuilds identities*" (Grimaldi & Porporato, 2012, p. 11).

Framed in this context, the research took place between 2012 and 2016 in four educational projects carried out in different areas of the region: the Turin metropolitan area, the urban areas of Eastern Piedmont, and the prestigious rural reality of the southern hilly area.

The projects are aimed primarily at an audience of young people between 12 and 19 years of age. They are intended to enhance cultural diversity and sensitize young people to it. Each individual project was articulated on the basis of requests from the teachers and educators who were in daily contact with young people. A training model already experienced in other locations was adapted to the specific needs of each context (Grimaldi & Porporato, 2012). Participants acquired and practiced the fundamental theories and methods for the collection of life stories and their conservation in *The Granaries of Memory*. Each project was divided in two phases. In the first phase, technical and methodological notions about the ethnographic interview (Skinner, 2013) and the video recording

aimed at archiving the materials within the *Granai* portal (Grimaldi & Porporato, 2012) were provided in classes and workshops. In the second phase, the students gathered autobiographies of individuals identified during the project with the support of researchers at the University of Gastronomic Sciences and their own teachers. Furthermore, the project involved young people in the discussion of the collected material as autobiographical documents-monuments (Le Goff, 1982) in order to stimulate their awareness at both the cognitive and emotional levels. They understood the recent transformation of migration and the evolution of the area. The results of this reflection were, ultimately, presented to the public in dedicated events.

Overall, therefore, the educational approach of the projects was based on the principles of *peer education*[2], i.e. intended to make the most of the individual experiences of participants and reinforce the perception of cogency toward the theme of cultural diversity. To further strengthen the participation, the theme of food as empathic tool (Hollan & Throop, 2011) was placed at the center of the narrated autobiographical practice, that is, food as creator of contact and closeness between interviewers and interviewees. Indeed, more than a century of anthropological debate suggests the potential benefits of food. With the studies by Boas (1921, 1925) and Malinowski (1922, 1927, 1929). modern anthropology has begun to interrogate the sociocultural role of food. Boas, with his collection of cases concerning the procurement, storage and processing of food among the Kwakiutl, highlighted how food is an important identifier for a social group. Malinowski, in his ethnographic analysis of the role played by yam in marriage rituals and micropolitics (De Mucci, 2009) in the Trobriand Islands, emphasized the importance of food as a political and ritual object. These early contributions opened a wider debate, which developed in particular after the Second World War, about the symbolic meaning of food (Douglas, 1966, 1992; Levi-Strauss, 1964, 1966, 1968) and its materialist interpretations (Harris, 1985; Mintz, 1985; Rappaport, 1967). In the last 20 years the debate has been revived further by placing the theme of cultural identity at the center of a renewed academic interest linked to reflection on globalization (Phillips, 2006; Pottier, 1999; Mintz & Du Bois, 2002) and, recently, to issues such as the boundary between environmental, economic, medical, and political anthropology (Guptill et al., 2016; Krebs, 2013). From this articulated disciplinary history emerges, not only the plasticity and the possibilities offered by the analysis of food practices and products, but also, and especially, the role of food as an object that creates a social space. Indeed, food is connected to individual and communal life by becoming an evocative object (Turkle, 2007), signifying affection, experiences, and life stories (Holtzman, 2006; Sutton, 2001). It is because of this role that sharing and talking about food

becomes a moment of sharing, of experience and knowledge, a methodology for inclusion and encounter with the "Other" (Counihan, 2009).

The research was divided into four projects: "The journey of a story," "Food through four eyes," "The granaries of Borgo Rovereto" and "Tastes and sounds of food and memory".

"*The journey of a story*" (*"Il viaggio di una storia"* in Italian) was conducted in collaboration with the Amaldi of Orbassano school (province of Turin), during the 2012–2013 school year, with 25 students aged between 17 and 19 years of age.

The students were involved in a 4-week training course about local and Italian contemporary history, methods of conducting interviews and ethnographic research about life stories, and the development of an interview track intended to tease out the meaning of migration, the experience of living in Italy and, specifically, Orbassano, and the food experiences between their native country and Italy. The pupils were then asked to interview two of their schoolmates, a classmate of Bulgarian origin and a former student of Colombian origin, and reflect on what emerged from their testimonies. The results of this reflections were presented publicly at the conference "*Open Discovery Space: Teaching and Knowledge*" held in Turin on October 24, 2014 during the event "*Salone del Gusto - Terra Madre 2013*".[3]

The second project, "*Food through four eyes*" *("Il cibo a quattr'occhi"* in Italian) took place in Vercelli during the 2013–2014 school year, on the occasion of the 2014 "*Peoples' Day*" promoted by the Vercelli Diocese. The project, organized in collaboration with the University of Eastern Piedmont and the Vercelli Diocese, involved 30 students between 18 and 20 years of age who attended high schools in the province at the time. Half of them were first-generation migrants from Eastern Europe, South America, and North Africa. They were involved in a 3-week training course focused on the anthropology of food and migration, the methodology of ethnographic interviews for the collection of life stories, and the development of a questionnaire designed to highlight the link between family history and individual food experiences. The students were then asked to interview each other, collect their respective life stories connected to the food experiences of the project participants, and to reflect on the significance of migration that emerged from these accounts. The results of this project were presented in Vercelli on November 28 during the conference "*When food is for everyone*".[4]

The third project, "*The Granaries of Borgo Rovereto ("I Granai di Borgo Rovereto"* in Italian), was conducted in collaboration with the Bovio-Cavour school of Alessandria and the University of Eastern Piedmont. It involved 20 middle-school students during the 2014–2015 school year. The students were enrolled on a 4-week training course intended to provide basic knowledge in the field of cultural anthropology

and anthropology of food, as well as basic information about contemporary Italian and local history, in particular analysis of the transformations that occurred in Alessandria and in the Rovereto neighborhood, the most multicultural areas of the city. The course resulted in acquisition of the fundamental skills for conducting interviews, the methodology of ethnographic research, and the collection of life stories. Furthermore, it produced a questionnaire to explore the relationship between individual professional history and the evolution of urban *foodscapes* (Domingos et al., 2014). The students interviewed four Alessandrian restaurateurs and pastry chefs working in Rovereto neighborhood. Two of the informants were first-generation migrants. The collection of the four entrepreneurs' life stories enabled the students to reflect on the transformations of their neighborhood and Alessandria. They presented the outcome of the project during the conference "*Yellow as honey*" *("Giallo come il miele"* in Italian) held in Milan on the occasion of Expo 2015, October 29, 2015.[5]

The fourth project, "*Tastes and sounds of food and memory*" (*"Suoni e Sapori del Cibo e della Memoria"* in Italian), was conducted during the 2015–2016 school-year and involved 30 students from the Arte Bianca Institute of Neive in Ferrero di Alba (province of Cuneo). The students were involved in a 6-week training course designed to provide them with the fundamentals of the anthropology of food and anthropology of migration, the methods for ethnographic research, interview, and collection of life stories, and the development of a questionnaire designed to highlight the link between individual life stories of migration and involvement in the food industry. The students were requested to conduct the interviews in French, English and Italian, with young gastronomy graduates from the University of Gastronomic Sciences and activists of the Slow Food network. The project results were presented as three distinct documentaries screened at three conferences held in Neive on March 10 and on May 3 and 31 as part of the "Sa & So" initiative.[6]

This article reflects systematically on the findings from these individual projects,[7] and on the data independently collected by the author by means of interviews conducted with the participants and their mentors, as well as the ethnographic observations in schools about relational dynamics among the participants (Gobbo & Gomes, 2003).

Public Space and Cultural Diversity

"At school, it seems to me that nobody cares about who I am, where I come from … it's not a problem, but sometimes I'm sad about that". These words epitomize the experience of a first-generation migrant teenager who took part in the "Food through four eyes" project. Other participating boys and girls expressed the same feeling, marked by a sense of

indifference and separation from the other students, rather than by phenomena of discrimination or opposition. "I don't remember cases of 'stupid' jokes or other discriminatory behavior among the students," one of the Orbassano teachers stressed. These statements by the Neive teachers highlight how, in everyday classroom life, the cultural element did not appear to be a cause or a reason for conflict between students. "There might be small groups, sometimes held together by the same culture, but throughout the years the groups change, mix on the basis of likes and dislikes … " another Neive teacher stated.

The relational lives of children in school, from the point of view of the project participants, ranged from a feeling of belonging to the classroom to participation in peer groups, which bound students in the same class with other children from other classes. These bonds were based on friendship and kinship in daily school life and acquaintances outside school. Religion or sharing the same language could also be elements that facilitated social relations, but the main determinant expressed by the students involved in the projects was common participation in extracurricular activities (e.g. membership of a sporting group, or a common work experience), friendships, or the proximity of their households (e.g. same city or district of residence). "*We live in the same city … in the end it is hard not to know each other and hang out with Italians and non-Italians*" remarked one of the young people of the Vercelli project who resided in one of the minor towns of the Turin area.

Project participants, both Italians and immigrants, did not perceive cultural diversity as an impediment to relationships with their classmates, and seldom reported "*unpleasant* cases" (to use an expression that occurred in the interviews). The most frequently reported cases of discrimination occurred outside school but in the same geographic context, by other persons or groups of older age, or in other areas during visits or trips.

Hence, although the issue of discrimination was not connected to the experience of a plural cultural environment, the discomfort of foreign children was linked to the perceived indifference toward them and their culture.

As shown by Herzfeld (1993), indifference is not only the expression of an individual preference or lack of attention toward a given socio-cultural phenomenon; it can also be read as the social result of a particular context implicitly or explicitly aimed at creating separation, even an affective separation, between different social groups.

This ethnographic intuition, developed on the basis of analysis of the Greek bureaucratic reality (Herzfeld, 1993) suggests a reflection on the socio-cultural context as experienced by the children; first of all, in the family. Often young people, especially girls, in the four research

contexts said that their parents or older relatives had warned them against potential dangers of peers with different cultural profiles. These warnings pointed at different ethnicities and religions, as well as gender, age, and social class as risk factors. Although the categorization of risk is a tool to understand the worldview of a community (Douglas, 1966), these admonitions show how the division between "Us" and "Other" develops on a variety of levels, where cultural differences are one of the determinants in the definition of distance. In this sense, it is not surprising that participants did not perceive these warnings as insurmountable obstacles for the creation of bonds with their peers. Indeed, they tended to belittle their significance, classifying the warnings as *"stupid"*, *"nonsense"*, and *"irrelevant"*.

Even if the cultural difference was not perceived as an element of danger and distance, the students (especially the Italian ones) expressed limited interest about knowing more about other cultures. This lack of interest can be regarded as a byproduct of a stereotyped vision of "the Other" that is transmitted along with the warnings. *"My father tells me to be careful with Africans", "My mother always tells me to stay away from the guys from here"* are examples of advices received by the participants. Such advices, formulated as they are, reiterate stereotyped stories about "the Other" within ethical and moral statements. Still, students do not feel the need to critically confront the issue of diversity and cultural complexity in the reproduction of the stereotype.

This approach to cultural diversity was often described by the students as an example of rebellion against the household. During an interview, a teenager participant in the Neive project shared his experience as follows: *"How often have I heard that Romanians are all thieves and you cannot be friends with them… can you believe that!?! All nonsense. I've met so many guys who come from there… what's wrong with them? Sometimes old people don't understand how the world goes."*

Statements like that were repeated in various forms during the projects. They highlighted how this sort of "order - resistance" dialectic was a common dynamic that enabled young people to establish contact with people of other nationalities or religions. In these experiences, however, although cultural diversity became an integral part of learning about other individuals, the drive to wider learning about other languages, customs, ways of life and knowledge was missing.

Learning a foreign language can be considered a *proxy* for deep learning about other cultures. Hence , after the Vercelli project, the students were selected on the basis of their motivation to know other cultures. Their willingness to learn foreign languages was most commonly

connected to an explicit and pragmatic intention to increase their employability.

Cultural diversity was, in the eyes of the students, a sort of contextual givenness, somehow removed from the spectrum of attention. That was especially evident in their perception of the city space. In the project conducted in Alessandria, for example, participants were positively surprised from learning about the history of the Rovereto neighborhood, as well as that of the city, and about its changes under the influence of various waves of immigration (Italian migration first, and then international migration). In particular, when they were lacking specific family or classroom guidance, they saw cultural diversity in Rovereto as an a-temporal and immutable characteristic of the city, evidenced in the many ethnic restaurants, prayer centers, and businesses run by migrants.

Cultural diversity in the lives of the students was not seen through the lens of conflict, but rather as a transparent reality, invisible in everyday interactions within the school context and, for many, even beyond the school. This could easily be interpreted as the expression of a profound interculturality and *métissage*.

The following stories provides another key to interpret this phenomenon. *"When I see the others [classmates] I only speak Italian… otherwise they wouldn't understand me…"*, *"I don't talk about my [Muslim] religion with others. They don't seem interested…"*, *"If I speak [Campano]dialect? Sure! […] No, I only use it in the family. At school, no… Nobody would understand and nobody seems to care…"* , *"At home I speak Albanian… out of the house? No… even with the other Albanian boys we speak Italian. […] No one [of the Italian comrades*] *has ever asked me anything about my language… […] No, not even the swearwords."*

The testimonies collected in the various projects provide the framework for a precise cultural geography in which cultural diversity is relegated to the private and family space. It makes the public space a neutral space, only superficially touched by diversity. Neutrality is guaranteed by the use of Italian as the *lingua franca* and by the removal of some topics (e.g. religion) from the discussion . The students appeared inhibited in the public use of a different language from the lingua franca or the discussion of family habits and customs. This exclusion, however, was not perceived as a form of marginalization, but rather as the result of structured social rules in the group. Faced with this peculiar configuration of the students' cultural space , both foreign students and those whose families came from other parts of Italy, repeatedly stressed the desire to see more interest from their peers in their personal history and family culture. In fact, as specified by a girl participanting in the Vercelli project: *"I would like to tell more about my story, but I notice that nobody cares."*

Narrative Sharing

Did the projects with their focus on the formulation and collection of life stories respond to the need stated above? The life story (Bertaux, 1999), more than other narrative forms, requires subjects to elaborate on their knowledge and experience, touching different areas of meaning (Bichi, 2000), exposing salient fragments of their own vision of the world, and articulating an emic narrative of local history and traditions (Bourdieu, 1999; Grimaldi & Porporato, 2012). In this sense, the story represents a form of direct and complete involvement or potential sharing on the part of the interviewee who is expected to open up and state his or her emic point of view. This is the particular methodological focus of the projects that turned life stories into a means of patrimonializing the oral history of a fragment of the global world. Furthermore, this strategy created a strong empathy between interviewee and interviewer, as peers. Such an involvement was strengthened by focusing on the theme of food. This is a subject in which the public and the participants shared an interest, as expressed by a great proportion of the participants in the Vercelli and Neive projects, in terms of courses focused on food. It is on this gastronomic ground that a greater interest toward "the Other" was expressed. Comments such as *"I am curious about how others eat"*, *"I want to learn new recipes"*, and *"I like ethnic food and I want to know more about it"*, exemplify such shared feelings. When the interviewee is a professional, such statements can serve as a model for young people, as was the case in Alessandria and Neive.

Within the curriculum, then, individual curiosity about the subject, as much as the necessity for cooperation and collaboration with other characters, sparked the participants' attention in the issue of cultural diversity. When the respondents were in front of an attentive audience, they were able to overcome the embarrassment that is common in front of a camera, they felt comfortable and related, through personal experience and the narrative of food, profound aspects of their individual history and their affections, as evidenced by the comments collected in the field: *"I never thought I would tell about my family"*, *"I was excited to see someone so interested in my story"*, *"it's the first time I open up so much with my classmates. It made me feel good."* The patrimonialization of individual narratives through digital recording and sharing represented a further enhancement of the experience, especially for the interviewees who were proud to see the continuation of their memory within a digital archive: As one of the participants of the Neive project commented,*"I seem to have done something important… even if, in the end, I just spoke about my everyday life"*.

At the end of the projects, comments from participants in each of the four cases showed increased awareness of cultural diversity, of one's own

territory, and a greater curiosity to discover traits of other cultures. The participants' temporarily interrupted the usual indifference toward different cultures. In light of these positive results, teachers expressed a willingness to draw on this experience to enrich the curriculums. They proposed new educational approaches in their courses and continued to do so over the following years, adding new projects to the ordinary curriculums. Examples of this process can be found in the projects carried out by the teachers in the Orbassano and Neive schools in the following years, which further enriched the value of biography and cultural diversity.

Conclusions

This article intended to reflect on the theme of the perception of cultural diversity among adolescents within the school context. In the current historical period the strengthening of old and new forms of racism and intolerance is recurrently highlighted. The research revealed that, within the horizon of the everyday experience of young participants, cultural diversity is not a common cause of clashes or marginalization. Rather, cultural diversity appears to be perceived by the students with scarce interest . This attitude generates above all form a form of relational pragmatism that allows knowledge, acquaintances and friendships among people of different cultural backgrounds without the need to discuss and consider much cultural diversity . Confronted with such exclusion (mostly expressed by young first-generation immigrants) the unspoken desire to share stories, experiences, languages, and habits contrasted with the lack of an attentive audience. The educational projects showed how to stimulate and foster dialogue and cultural exchange, starting from the valorization of individual experiences collected across life stories, particularly when these were centered on the theme of food.

The research shows a method of interaction and cultural enrichment that can be implemented in educational and community programs (e.g. Patané, 2017) aimed at strengthening exchange and integration processes. More specifically, it focuses on the actual insignificance of models that are recurrently presented in descriptions of cultural dynamics that characterize multicultural realities. The four examples, in fact, highlighted that cultural diversity is accompanied neither by a clash of civilizations, nor by a spontaneous crossbreeding of knowledge. The realities we explored suggest a sort of apathetic tension toward the theme of cultural diversity, which underpins the relational pragmatism.

In light of these findings, there is an urgent need to intervene, but not necessarily on the need to strengthen anti-racist repressive practices and top-down educational programs designed to promote a deeper understanding of world cultures. Rather, it is necessary to stimulate the mutual

sharing of different cultural experiences, starting from the experiences of peers and protagonists of local realities, in order to create a deeper interest, rooted in the everyday, and focused less on the repetition of more or less stereotyped theoretical models.

Notes

1. Quotations reported in the article, when not published in the videos and in the public contents of the projects, have been anonymized. Reference is made only to gender, age group (distinguished in three bands: 13–15, early adolescence; 15–18, adolescent; 19–22, young adult) and the geographical macro-area of origin.
2. Peer education is an approach to education that is frequently applied in social and medical prevention (Croce et al., 2011; Turner & Shepherd, 1999). It is centered on the articulation of, mostly horizontal and participative, educational processes. These are based on appreciation of a sort of socio-cultural closeness between mentors and participants, and are intended to activate the transmission of knowledge, emotions, and experiences facilitated by a setting with low hierarchical features.
3. The interviews collected by the students are accessible online at: Sara, Teodorova, Encheva, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archives/education-of-memory/sara-Teodorova-Encheva. Carmela, Giovanna, Cleopatra, Turco Jimenez, https://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/didattica-della-memoria/carmela-giovanna-cleopatra-turco-jimenez, last accessed May 31, 2019.
4. The interviews collected by the students are accessible online at: Rosalia Allegro, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/didattica-della-memoria/rosalia-allegro. Azzurra Bazzo, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/didattica-della-memoria/azzurra-bazzo. Emanuele Bertazzo, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archives/education-della-mandmortality/emanuele-bertazzo. Beatrice Borri - Bonetto, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archives/education-of-memory/Beatrice-borri-bonetto. Giulia Bortot, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/didattica-della-memoria/gi/education-of-memory/alfonso-Staianoulia-bortot. Dajana Braho, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/didactics-of-memory/dajana-braho. Francesca Cirillo, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/didactics-of-memory/francesca-cirillo. Georgia Concu, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/didactics-of-memory/georgia-concu. Federica Crepaldi, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/didattica-della-memoria/federica-crepaldi. Alberto Cucco, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/didattica-della-memoria/alberto-cucco. Artesa Fejzo, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/didattica-della-memoria/artesa-fejzo. Alessia Gibbin, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/didattica-della-memoria/alessia-gibbin. Giulia Girardi, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/didattica-della-memoria/giulia-girardi. Alexandra Harea, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/didattica-della-memoria/alexandra-harea. Madalina Jacob, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/didattica-della-memoria/madalina-jacob. Yulia Kuleshova, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/didactics-of-memory/yulia-kuleshova.

Alessia Lika, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/didattica-della-memoria/alessia-lika. Soumia Mahdoul, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/didattica-della-memoria/soumia-mahdoul. Camila Mansilla, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/didattica-della-memoria/camila-mansilla. Andrea Marangon, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/didattica-della-memoria/andrea-marangon. Marian Mazar, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/didattica-della-memoria/marian-mazar. Cristina Mazzoni, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/didactics-of-memory/cristina-mazzoni. Andrea Moschini, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/didattica-della-memoria/andrea-moschini. Said Ilhem Ait Moulad, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archives/education-of-memory/said-ilhem-ait–moulad. Alessandro Nadtochiy, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/didattica-della-memoria/alessandro-nadtochiy. Festus Odigie Osasu, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/didattica-della-memoria/festus-odigie-osasu. Lorenzo Pace, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archives/didattica-della-memoria/lorenzo-pace. Mattia Penini, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archives/didattica-of-memory/mattia-Penini. Nataly Ricaldi, http://www.granaidella memoria.it/index.php/it/archives/didattica-of-memory/nataly-Ricaldi. Chadia Sabbab, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archives/education-of-memory/Chadia-Sabbab. Miriana Sgaggero, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/didattica-della-memoria/miriana-sgaggero. Alfonso Staiano, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archives/education-of-memory/alfonso-Staiano. Ilie Svet, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/didattica-della-memoria/ilie-svet. Btissam Talib, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/didattica-della-memoria/btissam-talib. Ilse Vellano, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/didattica-of-memory/ilse-Vellano. Valentina Zingaro, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/didattica-della-memoria/valentina-zingaro, Last accessed May 31, 2019.

5. The interviews collected by the students are accessible online at: Tugay Kartal, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/didactics-of-memorytugay-kartal; Marco Roggero, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/didattica-della-memoria/marco-roggero; Beppe Sardi, http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/it/archivi/didattica-della-memoria/beppe-sardi. Sukhwinder Singh Hayer, http://www.granaidellam emoria.it/index.php/it/archives/education-the-memory/Sukhwinder-singh-hayer
6. The documentaries can be accessed online at: Chapter I: Food and interculture, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZeZ6P8m4IiM. Chapter II: The discovery of a new culture, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v = cQOOxyVgYKc. Chapter III: Learning together, https://youtu.be/Emwi68sMmOg. Last accessed May 31, 2019
7. The article is the result of the analysis of the materials collected by the author during his partecipation to the "Open Discovery Space" project, as a member of the University of Gastronomic Sciences reserach team. In the project, the Author designed the educational pathways, provided the training, curated the patrimonialisation of the collected interviews, and collected ethnographic data concerning the implementation of the project.

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